

AT THE TABERNACLE.

DR. TALMAGE FINDS MANY LESSONS IN THE LIFEBOAT.

A Touch of Sarcasm on Theology—A Good Word for Morality, but It Is Not Sufficient—The Only Ark of Safety—Get Abroad!

BROOKLYN, Oct. 22.—After preaching on nearly 4,000 different subjects and being followed by the printing press for about 24 hours, Dr. Talmage still seems to find new subjects that have never been preached on. This forenoon he chose for his subject "Unsafe Lifeboats," the text being Acts xxviii, 17, "Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat and let her fall off."

While your faces are yet somewhat browned by attendance on the international boat contest between the Vigilant and the Valkyrie, I address you. Good things there is no getting or dissipating, those outdoor sports. We want more fresh air and breeziness in our temperaments and our religion. A stale and slow and luxurious religion may have done for other times, yet will do for these. But my text calls our attention to a boat of a different sort, and instead of the Atlantic it is the Mediterranean, and instead of not wind enough, as the crew of the Vigilant and Valkyrie the other day complained, there is too much wind and the sweep of a Eucalyptus.

I am not calling your attention so much to the famous ship on which Paul was the distinguished passenger, but to the lifeboat of that ship which no one seems to notice. For a fortnight the vessel had been tossed and driven. For that two weeks, the account says, the passengers had "continued fasting. I suppose the salt water, basking over, had spoiled the sea biscuit, and the passengers were seeking anyhow."

The sailors said, "It is no use; this ship must go down," and they proposed among themselves to leave the lifeboat and get out and take the chances of reaching shore, although they pretended they were going to get over the sides of the big ship and down into the lifeboat only to do their duty. That was not sailorlike, for the sailors that I have known were all intrepid fellows and would not have parted with the ship that was such a means of saving those Jack Tars of my text attempted.

When on the Mediterranean last June the Victoria sank under the name of the Campania, the most majestic thing about that awful scene was that all the sailors stood by their posts doing their duty. As a class all over the world sailors are valorous, and these sailors of the text were exceptional and pretended to do duty while they were really preparing for flight in the lifeboat. But these "mariners on board-sea soldiers"—had in special charge a little missionary who was turning the water upside down, and when these mariners saw the trick the sailors were about to play they lifted the outcassies from the girdle and chop! went those outcassies into the ropes that held the lifeboat, and splash! it dropped into the sea.

My text describes it—"The soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat and let her fall off." As that empty lifeboat dropped and was capsize on a sea where for two weeks winds and billows had been in battle, I think that many on board the main vessel felt their last hope of ever reaching home had vanished. In that tempestuous sea a small boat could not have lived five minutes.

A THREAT TO SAILORS. My subject is "Unsafe Lifeboats." We cannot exaggerate the importance of the lifeboat. All honor to the memory of Lionel Lukin, the coach builder of London, who invented the first lifeboat, and I do not blame him for ordering put upon his lifeboat the words "Lionel Lukin" as you may still read there.

"This Lionel Lukin was the first who built a lifeboat, and was the original inventor of that principle of safety by which many lives and much property have been preserved from shipwreck, and he obtained for it the king's patent in the year 1788."

All honor to the memory of Sir William Hillary, who, living in the land of Man, and after assisting with his own hand in the rescue of 333 lives, the shipwrecked, stirred the English parliament to quick action in the construction of lifeboats. Thanks to God for the sublime and patriotic divine mission of the lifeboat. No one will doubt its important mission. When we read of the wreck of the Amazon in the bay of Biscay, of the Towed running on the reefs of the gulf of Mexico, or of the Ocean Monarch on the coast of Wales, or of the Birkenhead on the Cape of Good Hope, or of the Royal Charter on the coast of Angleson, or of the Escombro on the Scotch breakers, or of the Cambria on the Irish coast, or of the Atlantic on the rocks of Nova Scotia, or of the Lexington on Long Island sound.

To add still further to the importance of the lifeboat, remember there are at least 3,000,000 men following the sea, to say nothing of the uncounted millions at this moment, ocean passengers. We "land lubbers," as sailors call us, may not know the difference between a marlin spike and a ring bolt, or anything about leaving a leg or rigging out a flying jibboom, or furling a topsail, but we all realize to greater or less extent the importance of a lifeboat in every marine equipment.

THE SOLE LIFEBOAT.

But do we feel the importance of a lifeboat in the matter of the soul's rescue? There are times when we all feel that we are out at sea, and as many disturbing and anxious questions strike us as waves struck that vessel against the side of which the lifeboat of my text dangled. Questions about the church. Questions about the world. Questions about God. Questions about our eternal destiny. Every thinking man and woman has these questions, and in proportion as they are thinking people do these questions arise. There is no wrong in thinking. If God had not intended us to think and keep on thinking, he would not have built under this welshbone of the skull this thinking machine, which hurls not in its revolution from cradle to grave. Even the midnight does not stop the thinking machine, for when we are in dreams we are thinking, although we do not think as well.

All of us who are accustomed to thinking want to reach some solid shore of safety and satisfaction, and if any one has a good lifeboat that we may honorably take I wish he would passing it from the davits and let it get into it and put for shore. But I give you fair notice I must first examine the lifeboat before I risk my soul in it or advise you to risk your soul in it. All the splendid Hamagete lifeboats, and Margate lifeboats, and South Shields lifeboats, and American lifeboats were tested before being put into practical use as to their buoyancy and speed and stowage and self-righting capacity. And when you offer my soul a lifeboat I must first test it.

There is a splendid new lifeboat called Theology. It has only a little while been launched, although some of the planks are really several thousand years old, and from a worm eaten ship, but they are painted over and back, and they are really fatalism and pantheism of older time. We must forget that and call them Theology. The Grace Darling of this lifeboat was an old woman by the name of Mrs. Blue-sky, but the old woman now is Annie Beant. So many are getting aboard the boat it is worthy of examination, both because of the safety of those who have entered it and because we ourselves are invited to get in.

Is there a boat that everything is God. Horse and star and tree and man are parts of God. We have three souls—an animal soul, a human soul, a spiritual soul. The animal soul becomes aware while a wild thing, trying to express itself through instincts. It enters beasts or enters a human being, and when you find an effeminate man it is because a woman's soul has got into the man, and when you find a masculine woman it is because a man's soul has taken possession of a woman's body.

If you find a woman has become a platform speaker and like politics, she is possessed by a dead politician who 40 years

ago made the platform quack. The soul keeps wandering on and on, and may have 50 or 100 unnumbered different forms, and finally is absorbed in God. It was God at the start and will be God at the last. But who gives the authority for the truth of such a religion? Some beings living in a cave in central Asia. They are invisible to the naked eye, but they cross continents and seas in a flash.

My Baptist brother, Dr. Habeman, says that a theologian in New York was visited by one of these spiritual beings from central Asia. The gentleman knew it from the fact that the mysterious being left his pocket handkerchief, embroidered with his name and address, and after a most wonderful achievement of the theologian is that they kept out of the issue asylum. They prove the truth of the statement that to religion ever announced was beautiful, but it gained disciples. Societies in the United States and England and other lands have been established for the promulgation of Theology.

Instead of needing the revelation of a Bible, you can have these spirits from a cave in central Asia, to tell you all you ought to know, and after you leave this life you may become a prima donna, or a robin, or a gazelle, or a set, or a prizefighter, or a horse, or a jockey, and so be enabled to have a great variety of experience, floating through the universe, now rising, now falling, now shot out in a straight line, now in a curve, and on and on, and on, and up and up and down and down, and round and round. Don't you see? Now, that theologian lifeboat has been launched. It promises to take you off the rough sea of doubt into everlasting quietude. How do you like that lifeboat? My opinion is you had better initiate the members of my society, and let the ropes of that boat and let her fall off.

THE MORALIST'S HOPE. Another lifeboat tempting to enter is made up of many planks of good works. It is really a beautiful boat—amalgamating, practical sympathies for human suffering, rightness, virtue, and religion, and so on, and so on. I like the looks of the boat, and of the steering gear, and of many who are so ready to take themselves on her benches. But the trouble about that lifeboat is it leaks. I never knew a man yet good enough to earn heaven by his virtues alone. If there were no persons here present on this blessed Sabbath of our thoughts have been always right all, and all of whose words have always been right, let him stand up, or if already standing let him lift his hand, and I will know that he is.

Paul had it about right when he said, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." David had it about right when he said, "There is none that doeth good—no, not one." The old book had it about right when it said, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Let a man get off that lifeboat and get into the Mist, which sails up to the foot of Niagara falls, and then climb to the top of the falls, the descending floods, for he can do it easier than any man ever will be able to climb to heaven by his good works. If your thoughts have always been exactly right, and your words exactly right, and your deeds always exactly right, you can go up to the gate of heaven, and you need not even knock for admittance, but open it yourself and push the angels out of your way and go up and take one of the front seats.

But you would be so unlike any one else that has gone up from this world, that you would be a curiosity in heaven and more fit for a heavenly museum than for a place where the inhabitants could look at you free of charge. No, sir, I admire your good works, and that lifeboat you are thinking of trusting in is handsomer than any yawl or sloop or schooner or cutter that ever sailed out of a boat-house or hoisted sail for a race. But she leaks. Trust your soul in that, and you will go to the bottom. She leaks. So I initiate the members of my text, and with a cutlass strike the ropes of the boat and let her fall off.

THE HOPE OF THE HYPOCRITE. Another lifeboat is Christian Incense. The planks of this boat are composed of the split planks of shipwrecks. That poor is made out of hypocrisy from the life of a man who professes to know God and really was another. One car of this lifeboat was the falsehood of a church member, and the other was the wickedness of a minister of the gospel who had his iniquities were not for a long while found out. Not one plank from the oak of God's eternal truth in all that lifeboat. All the planks, by universal admission, are decayed and crumbling and fallen apart, and rotten and ready to sink. "Well, well!" "No one will want to get into that lifeboat."

Oh, my friend, you are mistaken. That is the most popular lifeboat ever constructed. That is the most popular lifeboat ever launched. Millions of people want to get into it. They jostle each other to get the best seat in the boat. You could not keep them back though you stood at the gunwales with a club, as on our ship Greece in a hurricane, and the storage passengers were determined to come up on deck, where they would have been washed off, and the officers stood at the top of the stairs clapping them back. Even by such violence that you could not keep people from jumping into the most popular lifeboat, made of church member inconsistencies. In times of revival when sinners flock into the inquiry room the most of them are kept from deciding aright because they know so many Christians who are bad.

The inquiry room becomes a world's fair for exhibition of all the frailties of church members, so that if you believe all is there told you you would be afraid to enter a church lest you get your pockets picked or your knickerbockers torn. This is the way they talk: "I was cheated out of \$500 by a leader of a Bible class." "A Sunday school teacher gossiped about me and told her class that I was a drunkard." "I had a partner in business who swamped my business concern by his trickery and then rolled up his eyes in Friday night prayer meeting, as though he were looking for Elijah's chariot to make a second trip and take up another passenger."

But what a cracked and water logged and grating seemed lifeboat the inconsistencies of others! Put me on a shingle mid-Atlantic and leave me there rather than that lifeboat of mine. I will not have a good word for it. I should get aboard it, and lest some of you make the mistake of getting into it I do as the mariners did on that Mediterranean ship when the ropes were about to get into the unsafe lifeboat of the text and lose their lives in that way. "Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat and let her fall off."

"Well," says some one, "this subject is very discouraging, for we must have lifeboats if we are ever to get ashore, and you have already condemned three." Ah, it is because I want to persuade you to take the only safe lifeboat. I will not allow you to be deceived and get on to the wild waves and then capsize or sink. Think God, there is a lifeboat that will take you ashore in heaven. The keel and ribs of this boat are made out of a tree that was set up on a bluff peak of Jerusalem a good many years ago. Both of the ribs are made out of a same tree. The rowlocks are made out of the same tree. The steering gear is made out of the same tree. The planks of it were hewn together by the hammer of ex-continuers who thought they were only killing a Christ, but were really pounding together an escape for all imperiled souls of all ages.

It is an old boat, but good as new, though it has been carrying passengers from sinking ships to firm shore for ages and has never lost a passenger. These old Christians begin to smile because it is dawning upon them what I mean. The fact is that in this way years ago they got off a vessel that was made out of all that was true. It is not a senseless jiggle that means frivolity, but it is a smile like that on the face of Christians the moment they leave earth for heaven, yet like the smile of God himself when he had completed the plan for saving the world.

Right after that big tumble of the Atlantic ocean six or seven weeks ago the boat at East Hampton I got the captain

of the life-saving station and said, "Captain, do you think a lifeboat could live in a sea like that?" Although the worst of it was over, the captain replied, "No, I don't think it could." But this lifeboat of which I speak can live in any sea and defies all breakers, and all cyclones, and all equinoxes, and all earth, and all hell. In 30 years the ship has saved the lives of over 45,000 of the shipwrecked, but this lifeboat that I commend has saved in 20 years hundreds of millions of the shipwrecked.

Like those newly invented English lifeboats, it is indestructible, self-righting and self-bailing. All along our rocky American coast things were left to chance for centuries, and the shipwrecked crawled up on the beach to die unless someone happened to walk along and see the lifeless ropes, there are many probabilities of rescue for the unfortunate of the sea. But the government of the United States has made better provision for the rescue of our souls. So close by that this moment we can put our hand on its top and swing into it, is this gospel lifeboat. It will not take you more than a second to get into it.

A LIFEBOAT FOR ALL. But while in my text we stand watching the mariners with their cutlasses, preparing to sever the ropes of the lifeboat and let her fall off, notice the poor equipment. Only one lifeboat. Two hundred and seventy-six passengers, as I counted them, and only one lifeboat. My text uses the singular and not the plural. "Cut off the ropes of the boat." I do not suppose it would have held more than 200 people, but by marine law all our modern vessels have enough lifeboats to hold all the crew and all the passengers in case of emergency, but the mariners of my text were standing by the only boat, and that a small boat, and yet 276 passengers. But what thrills through and through is the fact that though we are wrecked by sin and trouble, and there is only one lifeboat, that boat is large enough to hold all who are willing to get into it. The gospel by me expresses it.

All may come, whoever will. This man receives poor sinners still. Let a man land in that statement a little. Room for all in that lifeboat, with just one exception. Not you! I do not mean you, but there is one exception. There have been cases where ships were in trouble and the captain got all the passengers and crew into the lifeboats, but there was not room for the captain. He, through the sea-tramper, shouted, "Shove off now and pull for the beach." "Goodly," and then the captain with pathetic and sublime self sacrifice went down with the ship. So the Captain of our salvation, Christ the Lord, launches the gospel lifeboat and tells us all to get in, but he perishes. "It behooved Christ to suffer."

Was it not so, ye who witnessed his agonizing expiration? Simon of Cyrene, was it not so? Cavalry troops whose horses pawed the dust at the crucifixion, was it not so? Ye Marxs who crossed away with the sun of the midday heavens, was it not so? "By his stripes we are healed." By his death we live. By his sinking in the deep sea of suffering we get off in a safe lifeboat. Yes, we must put into this story a little of our own personality. We had a role in that very lifeboat from founded craft to solid shore.

Once on the racing seas I rowed. The storm was loud; the night was dark. The mean yawl and cutter lay away with the sun of the midday heavens, was it not so? "By his stripes we are healed." By his death we live. By his sinking in the deep sea of suffering we get off in a safe lifeboat. Yes, we must put into this story a little of our own personality. We had a role in that very lifeboat from founded craft to solid shore.

And be my remaining days on earth many or few I am going to spend my time in recommending the lifeboat which fetched me here, a poor sinner saved by grace, and in swinging the cutlasses to sever the ropes of my unsafe lifeboat and let her fall off. My heaver, without asking any questions, get into the gospel lifeboat. Room and yet there is room! The biggest boat on earth is the gospel lifeboat. You must remember the proportion of things, and that the shipwrecked craft is the whole earth, and the lifeboat must be in proportion. You talk about your Campanias, and your Lucanias, and your Majestics, and your City of New Yorks, but all of them are smaller than an Indian's canoe on Schraon lake compared with this gospel lifeboat, that is large enough to take in all nations. Room for one and room for all. Get in! "How? How?" you ask.

Well, I know how you feel, for summer before last on the sea of Finland, I had the same experience. The ship in which we sailed could not venture nearer than a mile from shore, where stood the rocky palace of Peterhof, and we had to get into a small boat and be rowed ashore. The water was rough, and as we went down the ladder at the side of the ship we held on to the railing, but in order to get into the boat we had to let go. How did I know that the boat was good and that the oarsmen were sufficient? How did I know that the Finland sea would not swallow us with one opening of its crystal jaws?

We had to trust, and we did trust, and our trust was well rewarded. In the same way get into this gospel lifeboat. Let go as long as you hold on to any other hope you are imperiled, and you get no advantage from the lifeboat. Let go! Does some one here say, "I guess I will hold on a little to my old works, or to a plume, or to something I can do in the way of achieving my own salvation. No, no, let go! Trust the Captain, who would not put you into a rickety or uncertain craft."

THE ONLY SAFE RESCUE. For the sake of your present and every-thing welfare, and for the urgency of an immortal addressing immortals, I cry from the depths of my soul and at the top of my voice, "Let go!" Last summer the life-saving crew at East Hampton invited me to come up to the life station and see the rescue practice, for twice a week they are drilled in the important work assigned them by the United States government, and they go through all the routine of saving the shipwrecked. But that would give little idea of what they would have to do if some mid-summer squall, the wind driving backward, a vessel should get in the grasp of a hurricane.

See the lights flare from the ship in the breakers, and then respecting lights flare from the beach, and hear the rockets buzz as they rise, and the lifeboat rumbles out, and the gun booms, and the lifeline rises and falls across the splintered decks, and the hawser tightens, and the life car goes to and fro, carrying the ex-austed mariners, and the ocean, as if ex-austed by the snatching of the hummer from the white teeth of its surf and the stroke of its billowing paw, rises with increased fury to assail the land. So now I am engaged in no light drill, practicing for what may come over some of your souls. It is with some of you wintry midnight, and your hopes for this world and the next are wrecked.

But see! See! The lights kindled on the beach. I throw out the life line. Haul in, haul over board! Ah, there is a lifeboat in the surf which all the wrath of earth and hell cannot swamp, and its Captain with

scored hand puts the trumpet to his lips as he cries, "Oh, Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but to me is thy help." But what is the use of all this if you decline to get into it. You might as well have been a sailor on board that foundering ship of the Mediterranean when the mariners cut the ropes of the boat and let her fall off.

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